

May 1, 2023

To: Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and Members of the Environment & Natural Resources Committee,

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 1473, An Act to Protect Certain Unfiltered Drinking Water Sources

My name is Toby Haber-Giasson and I live in Auburn.

I am writing as a concerned citizen to urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1473.

In 2019, I wrote an article about the work of the Lake Auburn Watershed Protection Commission (LAWPC) for a local magazine. That's how I learned about Auburn Water District's unique distinction as one of a handful of community water systems to qualify for a waiver from water filtration.

My research leads me to urge you to support continued compliance from both an environmental and economic standpoint:

- The filtration waiver requires diligence to comply with stringent quality criteria, through water treatment and watershed protection, in order to meet Maine's drinking water standards.
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- The filtration waiver keeps us taxpayers from having to shoulder the costs of an expensive water filtration plant. According to the EPA information, filtration would be 30-40 times more expensive than current preventive measures. Construction cost has been estimated at \$35-45 million, plus annual operational maintenance of \$1-2million.
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- Thanks to the filtration waiver, Auburn Water District's rates are among the lowest in the state - 11th out of 118 water districts, according to Maine PUC's Comparative Water Rates table for 2022.
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- If a community water system loses its waiver, their water ratepayers will likely see rates increase more than 50%.
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- All rate payers would see tax bills rise. That means residential customers like me, and also businesses like our hospitals and manufacturing facilities. These high utility costs could discourage families and businesses from living and doing business in Lewiston/Auburn, the state's second largest population center.

It makes sense from both an environmental and economic standpoint to do whatever we can to protect unfiltered water sources. It's far wiser to keep the water clean in the first place than to try to clean it up after we've ruined it.

Respectfully submitted,

Toby Haber-Giasson

Auburn, Maine